

**Newfields School District
Deliberative Session Minutes
February 2, 2016**

School Board Members: Chairman James McIlroy, Karla Dalton and Kirsten Lord

NES Principal: Kate Segal

Assistant Superintendent: Esther Asbell

School District Attorney: Attorney Sayward

Moderator: John Hayden

Town Clerk: Sue McKinnon

The meeting was called to order by Moderator John Hayden at 6:38pm

Moderator Hayden led us in the pledge of allegiance and introduced the head table. He briefly explained the purpose of the meeting was to review, debate, and possibly amend the school warrant articles as proposed. Voting on the articles will take place on March 8, 2016 at the Newfields Town Hall.

Article 1: Shall the Newfields School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$2,448, 333? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$2,425,671 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Newfields School Board or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. The Newfields School Board recommends this appropriation. The Newfields Budget Advisory Committee recommends.

Chairman McIlroy stated that the budget was reviewed in detail at the public budget hearing and welcomed any specific questions. The overall budget has increased .7 percent over last year due to contracted salary increases and special education needs. There is also an increase in supplies due to a supplier filing bankruptcy and having to purchase items from another supplier at a cost of \$10,000 more.

There were no questions and the Article 1 shall be placed on the ballot as written.

Article 2: Shall the School District raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 to be added to the School Building Maintenance Fund established at the 1992 School District meeting for the purpose of repairing and maintaining school buildings? The Newfields School Board recommends this appropriation. The Newfields Budget Advisory Committee recommends.

Chairman McIlroy stated this is a recurring warrant article that is used for maintenance of the building. The fund balance is approximately \$62,000. One large item, the heating unit in the multipurpose room, will eventually need to be replaced at a cost of 60-80k. The other large item is the replacement of the floor in the multipurpose room.

There were no questions and the Article 2 shall be placed on the ballot as written.

Article 3: To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of up to \$10,000 to be added to the Special Education Expendable Trust Fund previously established. This sum to come from the June 30 fund balance available for transfer on July 1. No amount to be raised from taxation. The Newfields School Board recommends this appropriation. The Newfields Budget Advisory Committee recommends.

Chairman McIlroy explained that this article is for unexpected special education costs. The funds are left over from last year's budget and no money will be raised through taxation. This is an emergency fund to be used for a child that moves to town and has been diagnosed with special education needs. This is the third year for the warrant article and once there is enough money in the reserve fund there be no need to continue to add to it.

Attorney Saywood mentioned that because the words "up to" are not in this warrant article there would need to be at least \$10,000 left over in the budget. Adding "up to" after the "sum of" will allow for any amount of leftover money in the budget to be added to the fund. A motion was made by Mike Price and seconded by Mike Sununu to amend the warrant article by adding the words "up to". The amendment was voted on and passed.

Article 3 shall be placed on the ballot as amended.

Article 4: By Citizens petition properly received, shall the Town adopt a "School Nepotism Policy for the Newfields School?" Full text of policy included in Town Report.

Petitioner Mike Sununu made a motion to dispense with the reading of the Nepotism policy and James McIlroy seconded. The motion to abstain from reading the warrant article was voted on and passed.

Mike Sununu stated that he is the person who submitted the petition. The warrant article would not prevent the hiring or promotion of a family member. A nepotism policy would prevent the family member from participating in the hiring or promotion of an employee. The Town ballot will have a similar article.

There was no discussion and Article 4 shall be placed on the ballot as written.

Article 5: By Citizen's Petition and the signatures of 25 registered voters, shall the Newfields School District raise and appropriate the sum of \$75,000 for the purpose of hiring one full-time regular education classroom teacher?

Chairman McIlroy stated that at one time the school had over 170 students. The current population is 138. Next year the population is estimated to be in the range of 125 students. When the drop in students occurred a teacher was let go and there has been no hiring or firing of anyone since. The School Board looks at the estimated population several times a year to determine if an additional teacher will be needed. In the last two years, the number of students per grade has ranged from 20 to 21.

Chairman McIlroy mentioned that two years ago, the school operating budget was increased at the deliberative session by \$70,000 because of concerns with people moving into town and classes becoming too large. The Town defeated the proposed budget.

There has been a real disagreement between the School Board and the petitioners as to whether or not the classes are too big. The first grade next year is expected to have 19 students. The Board felt 19 students did not warrant hiring another teacher. There have been many questions, concerns and hypothetical's brought up by parents. In response, the School Board asked Principal Segal to explore teaching options in the event of a significant increase in students. The principal presented the Board with nine options and blended classrooms were discussed. The School Board does not anticipate the need for blended classrooms.

Chairman McIlroy supports residents having the right to submit a citizen's petition. He asked those in attendance not to change the petition and allow it to go before the voters.

The School Board does not support the citizen's petition because it is not necessary. They have up until June to call a special meeting, if necessary. The School Board has tried to be fair and comprehensive and has taken concerns seriously. They want the best for the children. If they were looking at a class of more than 24 students they would automatically hire a teacher. Currently, two grades are split. Some parents and teachers don't like classes too small. There is no right or wrong number.

Kristen Johnson asked if the article passes must the school hire a teacher. It is not clear to her. Attorney Sayward responded that the money does not have to be spent and can only be allocated for a teacher. An amendment was suggested but not necessary according to Attorney Sayward.

A motion was made by Michael Sununu and seconded by Kim Crisp to add the following to the end of the article: "Expenditure of these funds is at the discretion of the school board" The amendment was voted on and passed.

Matthew Masiello asked if the article passes, will the money be raised whether needed or not.

Esther Asbell confirmed that the money will be raised if passed but it can only be spent on a teacher. If the money is not spent it will be returned to the Town.

Paul Bauer said he is the parent of a 1st grader and he does not want the class split because there is no need. If more people move to town and the classes get bigger we can hold a special meeting.

School Board Member Karla Dalton stated the School Board agrees having a class of 19-20 students is not too high. Although, the threshold may be higher than other towns. The Board does not want to pad the budget and they have done the best they can with the data they have.

Jan Trueman, a former school board member, said that running the school should be looked at as doing good business. The Board currently puts money away each year for the maintenance of the building and for special education needs that may arise in the future. Those two items are an insurance policy; good business.

Stacey Smith asked the average classroom size in the State. Chairman McIlroy responded that State guidelines are 25 students or less.

Christine Conner added that the average number of students per class compared to other Seacoast towns is 11-19 with 15 being the average.

Sarah Elwell said there are 19 children in the kindergarten class with two teachers and a paraprofessional. The student teacher ratio is greater. Chairman McIlroy added the lower grades have always been supported with paraprofessionals. In addition, several parents volunteer countless hours.

The current plan is to have one of the teachers move forward with the 1st grade class with one teacher and an assistant teacher.

Christine Conner commented that the kindergarten and 1st grade are growing. There are several young families moving to town.

There was no further discussion. Article 6 shall be placed on the ballot as amended.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:25pm

Respectfully submitted,

Sue McKinnon